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TAGS: PREL MNUC MARR NATO PARM PGOV GM RU

SUBJECT: NEW FM WESTERWELLE LIKELY TO RAISE NON-STRATEGIC
NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN FIRST MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY

REF: STATE 1337

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR GEORGE GLASS. REASONS: 1.4
(B) AND (D).

¶11. (S) SUMMARY. New German Foreign Minister Westerwelle will likely raise the issue of nuclear weapons when he has his initial meeting with Secretary Clinton in Washington this week. Given his very public advocacy over the past several months for the withdrawal of all remaining nuclear weapons from Germany, he knows he will get questions from the German press after the meeting and he will want to confirm that he is moving forward on one of the few foreign policy issues that distinguishes his Free Democratic Party (FDP) from Chancellor Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU). The MFA emphasizes, however, that Westerwelle is not looking for a "quick fix," that he will not take any action unilaterally and that he understands the need to consult widely before any decision is taken on withdrawal. MFA also emphasizes that Westerwelle's call for withdrawal does not mean that Germany wants to end its NATO nuclear share or that it insists on the withdrawal of all European-based non-strategic nuclear weapons. While acknowledging the need to take account of Russian tactical nuclear weapons, MFA believes that insisting on reciprocal cuts would probably make Westerwelle's proposal dead on arrival since the Russians seem unlikely to budge from their current posture any time soon. Germany believes a major step forward on conventional arms control will be necessary to get the Russians to end their reliance on nuclear weapons. The Secretary's meeting with Westerwelle will be a good opportunity to emphasize any red lines or concerns we have about his proposal before he gets too far down the road. END SUMMARY.

HIGH ON WESTERWELLE'S AGENDA

¶12. (S) The MFA has no concrete plan yet on how to implement the pledge in the new German government coalition agreement to seek, through NATO and with the United States, the withdrawal of all the remaining nuclear weapons in Germany (reftel). However, MFA NATO Office Director Bernhard Schlagheck and his deputy Gunnar Denecke told us on November 2 that new Foreign Minister Westerwelle would almost certainly raise the issue with Secretary Clinton when the two meet later this week in Washington. Given the prominence that Westerwelle has given to this issue in the past several months, he is sure to get questions from the German press and he will want to confirm that he is moving forward on one of the few foreign policy issues that distinguishes his Free Democratic Party (FDP) from Chancellor Merkel's Christian Democratic Union (CDU).

BUT NOT LOOKING FOR "QUICK FIX"

13. (S) Schlagheck quickly added, however, that while Westerwelle may want to highlight this issue to the Secretary, he will not press for a near-term withdrawal of the weapons. Schlagheck said that in talking to Westerwelle's advisors and others close to him, he has gotten the clear impression that Westerwelle is not looking for a "quick fix" and will not take any action unilaterally. He realizes that the current priority is on negotiating a new START agreement with the Russians and does not want to do anything to "muddle" things. He wants to avoid repeating what happened to former Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, when he went to Washington soon after taking office in 1998, pressed for U.S. agreement to a NATO nuclear no-use first pledge, and was sent packing with nothing to show for his efforts. According to Schlagheck, Westerwelle does not want to do anything to elicit an immediate negative response from the U.S. and other Allies. The new foreign minister realizes that he needs to consult not only with other Allies participating in the NATO nuclear share, but also with NATO members who have strong feelings about the impact that such a withdrawal could have on the credibility of the collective defense commitment in Article 5 of the NATO Treaty.

NARROW SCOPE OF PROPOSAL

14. (S) Schlagheck also emphasized that the call for the withdrawal of all remaining nuclear weapons in Germany does not necessarily mean that Westerwelle wants to end Germany's participation in the NATO nuclear share. Germany may be willing to remain part of that program and maintain its fleet

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of dual-capable aircraft, but have the applicable nuclear weapons stored in the U.S. or elsewhere. Likewise, the call for removing nuclear weapons from Germany does not mean that Westerwelle is insisting that all remaining non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) be withdrawn from Europe. Denecke noted that some Allies (he mentioned Turkey) may feel very wedded to maintaining their current stock of NATO nuclear weapons. It is also clear that the French are unlikely to change their nuclear posture.

"FRESH, NEW RATIONALE" NEEDED FOR NSNW

15. (S) Denecke said that Germany looks forward to the completion of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, noting that the U.S. is scheduled to brief the NATO High Level Group on the conclusions of the NPR in January. Denecke noted that even if the U.S. decides to maintain the status quo on NATO NSNW in Europe, it will be important to provide a "fresh, new rationale" for continuing to deploy the weapons since the original justification has been long overcome by events. Schlagheck acknowledged the need to take the continued presence of thousands of Russian tactical nuclear weapons oriented against NATO members into account when discussing the possible withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Germany and other Allied countries. However, Schlagheck admitted that Westerwelle had resisted making a direct reference to the Russian tactical nuclear weapons in the coalition agreement for fear of setting the bar "too high" for withdrawal of weapons from Germany, since the Russians seem unlikely to negotiate their own NSNW away in the short term.

LINK TO CFE

16. (S) The Germans believe that over the longer term, the best way to get the Russians to give up their reliance on tactical nuclear weapons is to have a robust conventional arms control regime in place. As a result, Schlagheck agreed that we can also expect new initiatives from the Westerwelle-led MFA to encourage the Russians to end their suspension of the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. In fact, the new government coalition agreement states flat out -- without any reference to preconditions or fulfillment of the long-standing Istanbul commitments -- that Germany is

ready to ratify the Adapted CFE to bring the Russians back on board with the regime.

COMMENT

¶7. (S) The call for withdrawal of all the remaining nuclear weapons in Germany is among just a handful of FDP demands that made it into the coalition agreement unscathed. It is also one of the few areas where Westerwelle can distinguish himself from the Chancellor and the CDU-CSU on foreign policy. Therefore, we can expect him to actively promote the idea. We believe that there is a good chance that he will raise it at his initial meeting with the Secretary, but only as an issue for further discussion. This might be a good opportunity to emphasize any red lines or concerns we have so as to keep Westerwelle's expectations in check. In his public remarks, Westerwelle insists, somewhat disingenuously, that his call for removal of remaining nuclear weapons is just "Germany's contribution" to the President's vision of a nuclear-free world.

¶8. (S) While the CDU-CSU supports the status quo, it went along with the FDP demand on the condition that the proposal for withdrawal be made through NATO and in consultation with the U.S. In doing so, it hedged against a possible U.S. policy change via the Nuclear Posture Review. We are told that former Defense Minister Jung, who led the negotiations on foreign and defense policy for the CDU-CSU, put a higher priority on preserving German participation in transatlantic programs like MEADS (Medium Extended Altitude Air Defense System) and on maintaining conscription than on holding the line on the NSNW issue.

DELAWIE